

# THE PAVILION OF SAINT MERCI

By MARY HEATON VORSE

[A Short-Story]

*NOTE: The recent policy of The FORUM has been to present at least one strong piece of fiction in each issue. The following powerful story is in line with this policy. Stories by Achmed Abdullah, Sax Rohmer, and prominent authors will follow.*

WHEN Mrs. Trevor told the old woman in the concierge's lodge that they had come to look at the Pavilion of Saint Merci, she stared at her without speaking. Her frightened glance traveled from Emily Trevor to Eileen and on to Geoffrey Morrow.

Her face already pale turned to ashen color; terror seemed to have engulfed her.

The Trevors had come for no more sinister purpose than finding a house in a secluded quarter, and the Pavilion de Saint Merci in the garden behind the old Hôtel de Saint Merci in the still and ancient quarter back of the Pantheon seemed to speak to them of shelter and of peace.

Suddenly the old woman broke the silence and her voice had the terror of a frightened seagull.

"Who told you the Pavilion was for rent?" she shrilled, "Was it Guyon the agent who told you that?" The two women shrank back while Geoffrey Morrow answered:

"Certainly, why not?"

Here the old woman burst into a shrill fit of unpleasant laughter. She checked herself in the middle of it and said soberly and earnestly:

"Guyon had no right to tell you that. If he wished to tell you anything he should have told you what I told him. What that was I can't tell you. I told it to Guyon—that was enough."

She saw the look in the eyes of the two women, and suddenly gained control of herself.

"Madame forgive the vagaries of an old woman. I am

not mad, I assure you, but the Pavilion has remained un-rented for so long—that surprise seized me.”

“Why has no one rented it?” asked Geoffrey. The old woman was silent a moment. It seemed as though she had entered into some fastness of her own spirit, as though she were debating some important problem. Then she replied steadily:

“The quarter is remote and there is but room for two people in the Pavilion.”

“It is what my daughter and myself want—a small place,” said Mrs. Trevor.

“Your daughter—” cried the old woman. “*Mademoiselle is your daughter!*”

The two women smiled; it was familiar ground for them and it had ceased to interest them that they were perpetually supposed to be sisters. Again the old woman’s gaze traveled from one to the other, as though she were debating some deep problem, and suddenly she rose to her feet with an unexpected briskness.

“*Allons!*” she said, and it was as though she had made some momentous decision. She took her keys from an ancient secretary, smoothed her apron and preceded them into the garden.

A light mist shrouded the tops of the trees, whose trunks stood out green against the walls, which were gray where they were not laden with ancient ivy. Now and then a golden leaf floated down as gently as a dying moth.

At the far end of the garden stood the Pavilion de Saint Merci as though it had shrunk away as far as it could from the great and stern building which shut it off from the street. Among the ancient and moss-grown trees it had almost an air of frivolity, for the Hôtel de Saint Merci presented to the world a grim facade. It spoke of the fighting age, an age full of obligations to the Church and the State and the Family, while the Pavilion, though ancient and faded, seemed to embody the whim of youth. Close beside the Pavilion was a discreet and inconspicuous door which led to the side street. Plainly this door existed for the convenience

of those who occupied the Pavilion, so that they might pass in and out unnoticed by the concierge of the hôtel. The concierge noticed that Geoffrey's eyes were on it and she said hastily:

"That door has not been used for many years, not since my grandfather's time. This door in the garden was left open the morning that young Edouard de Saint Merci was found on the floor of the Pavilion stabbed to death; since then the door has been closed firmly with bolts." And so curious was her way of saying this, so contemporaneous did she make it seem, that the two women looked at one another with something like apprehension—it seemed that only yesterday Edouard de Saint Merci might have been found dead within the Pavilion.

"Yes, yes!" went on the old woman, her troubled face darkening still further, "since that day the door to the garden has been bolted, and bolted it shall stay! Trouble always went in that door and trouble came out of it."

She fumbled with the key and threw the door wide open.

"Enter to the Pavilion de Saint Merci! Mesdames and Monsieur," she said. "No woman but myself has crossed this threshold for twenty-five years," and then, as though talking to herself, she nodded her head: "Yes, yes, twenty-five years! Yes, yes!"

From the ante-chamber they walked into the salon. The pale October sun shot a ray more silver than gold through the windows. The room itself seemed bathed in sunlight with the gilt of its mirrors and the yellow of its upholstery. Its furnishings were of the time of Napoleon and not the smallest object had been added since then. Its air of gaiety dispelled completely the discomfort of the scene. The old woman had recovered her serenity and prattled in homely fashion about the convenience of the place.

In spite of its threadbare aspect it had a curious air of recent occupancy; one was surprised not to see any vestige about of those who lived there. One expected a bit of needlework, a book turned upside down, roses fading. So definite was this that it brought from Mrs. Trevor the exclamation:

"Why, how extraordinary! The room only needs a fire lit to have a heart already."

"I keep it tended and aired," the old woman explained. And when Eileen said to her:

"It seems as if those who lived here might return at any moment," she replied:

"Perhaps they do. Who knows? I keep it in readiness." She turned and faced them. "Pardon, Mesdames, Monsieur," she said, "you must have thought my conduct more than strange, but as you asked for the Pavilion a flood of memories came over me—the memory of Monsieur Julien who brooded so many years here, and of Madame Paul and of all those in this family whom I have served—that it has unnerved me. My father and my grandfather before me served the Saint Mercis, and you and your daughter in some way reminded me of the ladies whom I knew so well. I am an old woman, Madame,—forgive me." She turned with a gesture full of kindness to Mrs. Trevor.

"I think," she said, "I know why you like this place in its seclusion. I think it made you feel a place burdened with the memories of others who would be kind to you."

And by the very kindness of her remark and the intimacy of it a relation of almost friendship was established between them; and it was decided before they left that she should work for them as *femme de menage*.

As they walked through the garden, Mrs. Trevor ahead with the concierge, Eileen turned to Geoffrey.

"I never saw Mother like anything so much since Father died,—to be so interested in anything. Usually after a scene like this she would have refused to look at the house at all."

Geoffrey nodded. He, too, had noticed that the quiet apathy which had surrounded Emily Trevor since Anderson's death had dropped from her and that she seemed to have reflected the radiance of the silver sunlight. He thought, too, how extraordinarily these women with their fragile grace fitted into the picture, as though the finding of the Pavilion de Saint Merci was but a homecoming. He had been trying

for two years to dispel Emily's apathy, and he had seldom been able to. Now, of a sudden it had dropped from her like a cloak.

The first meal that he took with them intensified this impression. They fitted in as if they had always been living there. Mme. Etienne served the perfectly cooked dinner as though the Trevors were ladies of her own family. He wondered what it was that had happened to both of them, for if Emily had come shyly forth into life, Eileen appeared to him in the guise of a young woman, and this almost hurt him. It disturbed him and made him glad and yet, for her sake, pained him. He found it also curiously upsetting for he had always thought of her with the same tender impersonality that one feels for one's own child or one's sister.

The first week passed in lovely quiet, and yet a quiet that was curiously transforming to both women. It seemed to Geoffrey that each of them became more vivid and more lovable. It seemed that he had never known Eileen before and he threw himself into the excitement of this new friendship.

Emily was unconscious of their growing intimacy, until one afternoon Geoffrey and Eileen instead of coming in after a walk paced slowly up and down in the mellow spaces of the garden deep in talk. The place seemed bathed in yellow. The fallen sycamore leaves lay under foot like sunlight. A yellow cat walked sedately behind them. Emily had often watched them before as they walked up and down the garden, but to-day the sight of them turned her suddenly cold.

She saw Eileen turn her head toward Geoffrey and Geoffrey's tender gesture of response, and again fear clutched at her heart; and then suddenly from unknown depths in her came jealousy, which shook and frightened her. It was a sudden, quick emotion, a shuddering thing that carried with it almost hatred.

She recoiled from it shiveringly.

She had never been conscious of loving Geoffrey. She was not conscious of loving him now. She only knew he was a part of life itself and she knew also that this look of Eileen's was inimical to what meant life to her. She wondered if our

hidden depths are like the depths of the sea, where monsters lie asleep and where also lie gray bones of things long dead.

All that was tender in her was revolted by what she felt, her own husband still lived daily in her memory. It was her habit to talk with Geoffrey as if Anderson were still living, as if only yesterday he had said so and so. And this sudden flash of jealousy shocked her as much as though Anderson had been still living, and she had found out that she loved Geoffrey also.

So, because she could not have lived with herself another moment had she believed herself jealous of her own daughter, she was forced to lie to herself.

"I should have thought about it before," she thought. "It would be a most unsuitable marriage,—most unsuitable. Eileen isn't ready for marriage. She's only nineteen and her character's not formed, and Geoffrey is twelve years older than she." She comforted herself: "Oh, well! there's nothing in it—I'll go out and get the whole thing out of my head."

"Eileen," she called, "I am going to make some visits. Will you come with me, dear?"

Eileen's eyes sought her mother's and the light went out of her face; and Geoffrey thought for the hundredth time how like they were, both creatures of light and shallow, what was stormy in Eileen's temper was made gentle in Emily by experience and understanding. As he stood there before them, it seemed to him that his heart enveloped both of them in an embrace, as if he looked at but one woman. They were both women of that poignant sort that melted a man's very heart, who made that man, who loved them, love them so that love became almost an anguish. Now Eileen answered her mother:

"I don't think I'll go to-day."

"Please, dear," Emily insisted gently.

"I don't think I'll go," the girl answered. Her brows made a stormy line across her face.

"I hate to go out alone," there was a little break in Emily's voice.

They stood facing each other and between them was the

first definite conflict of wills that Geoffrey had ever witnessed, and his heart went out to Emily, and yet, there was something in Eileen's manner that moved him deeply. He knew well enough that she could not bear the thought to lose even a moment of their golden understanding that had suddenly blossomed between them. So for a moment, they stood both of them, Eileen defiant and Emily with so quenched a look in her face that Geoffrey wanted to put his arms around her and comfort her as he had the day when Anderson had died. Finally, Emily said:

"Very well, dear," and turned slowly away with the drooping look of someone deeply affected. The door closed behind her. Eileen turned on him a smile of flashing radiance.

"It's bad of me, but I can't care to-day. I can't care at all. Do you think it's wrong of me?" She had all her mother's wistfulness as though she were begging Geoffrey to understand, and suddenly he drew her to him. At this she drew her breath in swiftly and put her hand to her heart.

Her look and her gesture held so much joy and so much tenderness that in a moment Geoffrey was telling her that he had always loved her, even when she was a child, and that he had been waiting for her to grow up. So deep was his feeling that he forgot that it had been only within the last few days that he had thought of her as anything but a lovely child, or that his heart had beat at her approach. He had always been amused at her likeness to Emily and had thought how easy it would be to mix them up—then all at once he had seen her as if for the first time.

"I suppose I must have always loved you," Eileen said, "only I didn't know it for a long time. For a long time I did not think of you, some way, as exactly a man at all."

"That's flattering," said Morrow, "why not?"

"Well, I mean in the way you don't think of a relative as a man," Eileen explained, "you know, I had a curious idea about you——" She hesitated. Her delicate flush recalled Emily vividly to his mind, and her little air of embarrassment, as a child having been caught at something naughty, then she

went on. "Well, without reasoning about it, I took it for granted—well, that you were Mother's, you know."

A curious pain contracted Geoffrey's heart. This thought touched some very deep place in him.

"You mean that you thought I cared for her?" and he was surprised that he found it difficult to ask this.

"Well, not exactly *cared*. I didn't think of it in those terms. It's just as I said before, that you just were *Mother's*. I didn't think about your being in love with her."

They had come into the Pavilion by now.

"But you aren't Mother's!" she cried, "you aren't! You're mine!"

At that Geoffrey drew her all yielding toward him. They stood together in the enveloping light of the golden room.

"Do you know when I first began to think about you? It was when we first came here. Do you know, Geoffrey, when we first came in this house to see it, I had a sudden feeling of having been here before and been here before with you; and as though it was some lovely and disturbing memory. Ever since that time I have been trying to make you like me."

She took his hand in hers and shyly put her head on it. She came out all the way to him in tender passion and yet with such sweet shyness that he felt that any hasty gesture on his part would startle her into flight.

"Do you feel, Geoffrey," she asked him presently, "as if you had always been waiting for this moment, waiting for it for a long time, just for me to sit close against you?" And as Geoffrey truthfully from his heart answered:

"Yes," he answered, while his inner consciousness thought, that was just what Emily might have said to him, and with this thought something hurt him, yet he felt strangely released as though he had been living in the dark for a long time and had been strangely deceiving himself and that by not recognizing his love sooner he had been denying himself life.

"How do you think your mother will like it?" he asked Eileen. She turned her head in her graceful, startled way.



"Why, she'll love it. We've all been so much together since Father died. And now, we'll always be together!" And suddenly she turned to him with imploring arms held out.

"Hold me close to you, Geoffrey! Don't let me go from you ever! When I said 'always' do you know what I felt? I felt—I felt as if it wasn't so."

"It wasn't so?" Geoffrey echoed stupidly.

"No, as if we had just had a beautiful moment and that was going to go as suddenly as it came." He held her to him and soothed her. She was shivering.

"Lovers always say such things. Lovers always think that what they feel is too beautiful to last."

"Oh, wouldn't it be an awful thing if she didn't like it?" she cried. She was silent, then with deep seriousness she said:

"If she did not like it, I tell you what we would do, Geoffrey. We'd just elope, wouldn't we?"

"Of course, we would!" Geoffrey cried.

"If Mother really didn't like it, would you marry me anyhow?" Eileen asked. This question smote him to the heart, and he knew then that in spite of his welling passion for Eileen he could never for one second do anything to darken Emily Trevor's life.

"Would you marry me if she didn't want you to?" he counter-questioned. She threw her arms about him with a fierce tenderness.

"I'd marry you in spite of anyone!" she cried, and then as if frightened of her own passion she released him and sat down across the room. The door opened and Emily came in.

"Now we can ask her," Geoffrey cried out joyously.

"Ask me what?" said Emily, enveloping them both in her lovely, baffling smile. A curious fear clutched at Geoffrey's heart, no power on earth could have made him say the words that came so lightly from Eileen's lips, as in a sweet and serious way she went to her mother and put her arms about her with an encompassing gesture as if to include her in her happiness.

"Ask you if you wouldn't be glad, dear, to have Geof-

frey and me get married. That's why I was so bad," she went on pleadingly, "that's why I couldn't go with you. I thought Geoffrey might ask me to marry him if I stayed."

"I'm so glad," Emily found herself saying smoothly. "Dear Geoffrey! Dear Eileen!" Her eyes shone.

Madame Etienne came in with the lamp. She glanced with a sudden strange comprehension from one to the other, and over her old face there swept a look of sudden fear. She set the lamp down noisily and steadied herself at the table. Then she hurried away, and the manner of her going gave the sinister impression of someone escaping from an unbearable sight.

The three stood looking at each other searching for words; it was as if the room had grown dark and cold, as if a door had opened upon some chill and tragic spot, that from this enclosed and dark place had come some old miasma that obscured all the simple, happy things of life.

All color had ebbed slowly from Emily's face and had left it chalk-white but for the scarlet of her mouth and the dark of her frightened eyes; then, suddenly Eileen flung herself on Geoffrey's neck, sobbing.

"Oh, I can't bear to have this happen! Oh, I can't bear to have this happen—not to-day!" He soothed her with gentle impatience.

"Silly thing, silly child, nothing's happened,—what's happened, Eileen darling?" And Emily, at the sight of Eileen's tears, echoed Geoffrey's words:

"Nothing at all has happened, Eileen dear!" But Eileen still clung to Geoffrey, sobbing:

"I know, I know, it's nothing. It isn't anything, and yet, you know she saw when she came in how it was between us all; she *saw*, and it was as though it gave her," her voice faltered again, "as though it gave her—a horror!" Geoffrey shook her ever so slightly.

"Eileen," he said firmly, "you're absurd. The old thing felt faint, or something. Isn't it so, Emily?"

"Why of course it's so," Emily was quite tranquil now, "go upstairs, silly little girl, and wash your eyes. If any-

body spoils this day for you, it'll be yourself; come on, we'll dress for dinner both of us. We'll put on the best things we have to celebrate."

When Madame Etienne announced, "Madame est servie," she too had dressed and she had set the table as though for guests. She smiled on them all in her usual friendly fashion.

"I permitted myself to send for a bottle of old wine," she told them. "You will wish to drink the health of Monsieur and Mad'moiselle, to-night, Madame, will you not?" By her manner she so completely ignored the scene of a moment before, that it was impossible to ask her if she had felt ill.

During the next days Eileen bloomed. There was a vividness in her joy that made people turn on the street to look at her, there was a quality about her that touched Geoffrey's heart and made Emily yearn over her, and which caused Madame Etienne to hover about her.

For herself, Emily had closed the door on her black half-hour. She told herself that she now accepted the whole thing fully, and that she had had merely a mother's reluctance in seeing her child go from her too soon. After all, she argued, who would make a better husband than Geoffrey, Anderson's tried friend, and her's? He had always seemed her contemporary, so that the idea at first held a strangeness for her.

Yet, as Eileen bloomed, Emily's new-found life seemed to ebb away. She longed for Anderson with a poignancy she hadn't known since the first days after his death. It seemed to her in her loneliness more than she could bear, to witness this young blossoming of love. It was as if in some vicarious way she shared every heart-beat of Eileen's, but that the sight of this love left her in a world of shadows, young yet, and living, but as though she in reality lived only with the dead.

She was cut off from life on all sides. If Eileen had loved someone else, she could have talked with Geoffrey and she needed intensely the sympathy which she couldn't demand

from him. In their happiness they were so deeply cruel. They were so oblivious of what memories the sight of them must arouse in her, and into what a deep gulf of loneliness the ever present spectacle of their love plunged her.

Between her and Mme. Etienne there grew some strange sympathy. More than once she surprised the old woman's gaze resting on her tenderly, as though she would mutely say, "I know, I know, I understand," and sometimes it seemed as though there was almost fear in this gaze.

After a time she found herself in a curious mood of suspense as though she were waiting for something to happen, and this mood communicated itself at last to Eileen. They were sitting together in the dusk and suddenly Eileen asked:

"What are you waiting for?"

"Nothing," Emily answered, a startled note in her voice.

"You seemed as though you were waiting for someone," Eileen insisted.

"No, I'm just listening," Emily surprised herself by acknowledging.

"Listening to what?"

"Listening to the past mostly, I think. Since we came here you know it's as if I heard them—the people who lived here before—talking more loudly all the time." Eileen jumped abruptly to her feet.

"I wish you wouldn't say such things! I wish you wouldn't feel such things!" What right has the past to come and put its dead hand into the present? It isn't fair of you!" She spoke with passion and with anger.

"Eileen!" cried Emily. She too arose to her feet. They stood facing each other, strangely alike, and for a moment infinitely hostile. The moment held terror for both of them; and Geoffrey as he came in found them confronting each other. Emily dropped limply in a chair.

"Why, Emily dear," he asked, "aren't you well?"

"Of course she's well; aren't you?" Eileen answered for her. She stood over her mother in an attitude of young

ruthlessness, "Aren't you well?" she demanded, and then to Geoffrey:

"Why shouldn't she be well?" Very white, Emily answered like a gentle echo,

"Of course I'm well. Why shouldn't I be?"

"You see!" Eileen cried in triumph. "You see!"

"Eileen!" Geoffrey said sternly, "I think you're cruel,—cruel and thoughtless! Emily *isn't* well, she hasn't been the same for days. I don't know what's wrong, but it's as if life's been ebbing away drop by drop from her—and we've not noticed. What's the matter, Emily? Emily, dear, what's the matter?" But Emily, at the sound of his sympathy and understanding, had closed her eyes and difficult tears slid down her cheeks.

Eileen stood watching Geoffrey and her mother, her eyes narrowing, her face hardening with all the hardness of affronted youth.

"*Cruel!*" she said again. Her voice dropped into a tone of low menace. "No one shall speak like that to me!" Geoffrey's back was toward her, while he wiped Emily's tears away and patted her hand murmuring:

"Don't, Emily,—don't dear,——"

"Do you hear?" Eileen went on; her voice was like the edge of a knife, "*No one shall speak to me like that——!*"

"Yes, I hear you," Geoffrey answered without turning his head, "I hear you making a scene while your mother's suffering!"

Eileen stood as if seeing them for the first time, examining them with dreadful scrutiny. Slowly her face set, she looked old, older than Emily, and then very slowly she walked from the room.

"Eileen," her mother called, "Eileen, don't go!"

"Very well," she answered, "I'll get the lamp from Madame Etienne, I think, I don't want her coming in looking at us as though she'd seen ghosts." She brought back the lamp and set it down with even precision.

"For heaven's sake," Geoffrey cried, "what's this all about? What a tempest over nothing!"

"I didn't make the tempest," came Eileen's hard little voice.

"Well, dear, you unmake it then," he conciliated.

"You can't unmake things that have happened," she gave back sharply.

"Eileen," her mother implored, "anybody can unmake anything by just being good enough." She looked around helplessly. "Where did it all come from,—this storm?"

"Where, indeed?" Eileen inquired. There was in her voice disdain and in the glance she cast at her mother, suspicion.

"I'm going to dress for dinner now," she said and left them. It was only when Eileen had gone that Emily noticed that Geoffrey still held her hand, and that in its warmth there was immense solace.

"It's nothing, Geoffrey, really nothing," she assured him, "just shadows. Sometimes I get enclosed in the sad house of myself and I can't cry for help."

"Not even to me, when you know I'm always there, Emily?" He was profoundly shocked and wounded. "Why not?"

"I don't know why—I just can't, that's all." They were silent a moment, then Emily said with a tender little smile:

"I know just how Eileen feels. I know it as though I were Eileen herself. I used to be like that, too, Geoffrey, when I was young—glittering and hard sometimes when anything interfered with what I wanted, even if it was only a mood I wanted."

"I don't believe it, Emily, you were never as unkind in all your life."

"Hush, Geoffrey," she warned him. "Hush, you mustn't say things like that."

"I can't bear to have her thoughtless—I won't have you hurt, Emily. No one shall hurt you, Emily—not even for a moment." There was a savage tenderness in his voice, and even though she again warned him with—"Hush, Geoffrey," his championship of her was immeasurably sweet.

Dinner was a resolute and painstaking ignoring of all

that occurred, a certain keeping up of appearances for the sake of Madame Etienne, though at each little overture of tenderness on Geoffrey's part Eileen became rigid. She talked gaily and seemed to take a malicious delight in erecting an impenetrable wall between herself and Geoffrey.

When Emily went early to bed and left them, Geoffrey went over to Eileen and would have taken her in his arms. He sensed that behind her wall of hardness and of gaiety she was suffering profoundly.

"Eileen," he said, "don't do this to you and to me. I know what's happening to you, behind this shining hardness of yours."

"What's that?" she asked him.

"Well, it's as if behind this rampart of yours, your soul's softening itself into everything that's made your mother all softness and kindness and understanding." At this she arose very softly and deliberately.

"Goodnight, Geoffrey dear," she said, "mother, as you've pointed out, isn't well and I'm going up to take care of her."

"Don't go like that—not in that mood," he implored, "at least kiss me good-night, Eileen."

"No, not to-night, I think," she said after deliberate consideration of the question.

"Then at least let me kiss you in kindness." She came toward him submissively and turned him a cool cheek, and it seemed to Geoffrey as if he was kissing a stranger. He left, furious that he had to relinquish Emily to Eileen's uncomprehending hardness; yet his heart was rent for Eileen, for he knew she was suffering, although he couldn't understand why, and still his instinct was of service and help as it had always been to her and to Emily.

During the next days Eileen treated him with deliberate and cruel perversity. She agreed to every suggestion of his, and all the time held herself mockingly inaccessible, but the thing that kindled in him a smoldering anger was that she was as hard to Emily as she was to him. She made many engagements with friends of hers which excluded them both.

Left alone with Emily he felt himself solaced by her kindness, her unspoken sympathy bathed the wounds of his spirit. They permitted themselves no discussion of the situation. Once he asked Emily:

“Do you know what’s the matter?” And her only answer was to shake her head, and her only consolation was:

“It’s a mood that will pass, Geoffrey.”

It was that afternoon that Mme. Etienne came to Emily.

“Madame,” she said and in her tone there was a deep seriousness, “Paris is not agreeing with Mad’moiselle. This often happens to Americans in this northern climate. When my lady entertained many Americans, I heard them say that they were unaccustomed to the slanting rays of the northern sun. Pardon, Madame, but in Madame’s place I would take Mad’moiselle to the Midi at once—it would also suit Madame—there was a time when Madame herself seemed ill to me.” She looked at Emily and her old eyes held warning and sadness and fear.

When Geoffrey came in for tea, Emily told him of this conversation.

“When Eileen comes home,” she suggested, “take her out and talk to her about it. You know Mme. Etienne almost frightened me—— She looked as she did the first day——”

“But you’re better, Emily,” said Geoffrey, “you’ve been looking a lot better in spite of the strain of things—and all that’s the matter with Eileen is her infernal obstinacy. I’ll take her out, though, and talk to her about going away, if you want me to.”

They were not gone long. When they came in Eileen went to her room and Geoffrey joined Emily in the salon. The strained look that had been in his face was gone. He stood silently before Emily for a moment as if waiting for her to speak.

“What’s happened, Geoffrey?” she asked him gently.

“She doesn’t love me any more—she’s broken with me—and I—Emily, I’m glad! I’m glad! I never loved her, I suppose I thought of you as belonging to Anderson forever; and Eileen was so like you—but it’s you, Emily—it’s always



been you, and you needed me—as I needed you! I’ve been loving you through Eileen and I didn’t know it until the day she hurt you. Oh, Emily, she doesn’t love me—she doesn’t love me—she doesn’t love me at all—she had the instinct of youth toward love and toward me, but it wasn’t me, it never was me, and it never was Eileen! I loved her when she was like you, but when she was like herself, I felt as if I were in an alien country where forever I should be homesick for the thing I love. With her I should have died of homesickness, Emily—for home.”

And at each of Geoffrey’s words Emily’s soul rejoiced. It seemed to her she’d been living in darkness and shadow and at last had come out into the sunlight. She passionately wanted to believe it was true that Eileen never cared, and so she did believe it, and for one golden moment, they stood with their hands clasped, looking into each other’s eyes. Then there was a little rustle and the noise of a door closing.

“What was that!” Emily whispered—silence—there was not a sound in the whole house.

They stood staring at each other, possessed by a strange feeling of guilt. Then suddenly—

“Eileen!” cried Emily—her voice echoed horribly through the silent house. They stared at each other, and instead of the love that had been in their eyes, they looked at each other like frightened conspirators.

They could not find words to break through the haunted silence and for a moment they seemed deprived of action, unable to face the meaning of that little rustle and the closing of the door. At last—

“Do you think she was there?” Emily whispered.

Geoffrey didn’t know. He stood still as though frozen with the fear that had gripped his heart. Then came the sound of rapid footsteps and Madame Etienne threw herself into the room.

“Madame, Madame,” she cried, “Mad’moiselle has gone! She ran hatless into the street—through the little door—the bolts had rusted, and I ran after her. She fled like something demented down the street—Oh, God!—she

looked like Mme. Paul when she fled down the garden path from the Pavilion. It's my fault," she went on, her voice rising to a shriek, "it's my fault; the Pavilion of Saint Merci is a house accursed, and so has always been. It distils from its walls some venom which poisons the spirit. No one who has youth can live within it. I have known it to kill their souls and their faith in everything which made life dear to them. Its poison is jealousy and it has poisoned you. I saw you die of jealousy of your child. I saw her face grow white for jealousy of you—and now your life together is destroyed! It was as though you have one common fountain of life which both of you could not use and she has gone. Never any more—never any more, can love come between the three of you——"

They stood a second frozen, looking at each other as though from some immense distance.

"Emily," Geoffrey cried.

She raised her hand in a gesture of passionate dissent.

"Come," she cried to Madame Etienne. "We must look for her together."